



Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
San Wong, Director

ICSAA

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans
Virtual Commission Meeting
April 28, 2022
3:00 – 5:00 PM

Minutes

Welcome and Roll Call

Meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by chairperson Ahmadu Baba-Singhri
Dr. Baba-Singhri welcomed everyone to the meeting including new commission members, Wendell Talley and Whitney Smith McIntosh. Kim Cheeks called the roll for attendance.

Present:

Ahmadu Baba-Singhri, Veronica (Lynn) Sutton, Kenneth Morris, Jr., Monica Mead, Whitney Smith-McIntosh, Wendell Talley, Rosalind Fox, Aaron Sewell, San Wong, ex-officio

Aaron Sewell, new member from West Des Moines, works for non-profit CFUM, was a classroom teacher, excited to be on the board, looking forward to learning and being a meaningful voice.

Jonathan Whitfield, new member, a West Des Moines resident, pastor of Corinthian Baptist Church Des Moines, and president of the Baptist State Convention.

Staff:

Kim Cheeks, Monica Stone

Amendments to the agenda

- Farewell to outgoing commission members will be at the end of the meeting
- Public comment will be moved to the end of the meeting as well

Approval of Minutes – Mar. 24, 2022

Motion to approve the Feb. 24, 2021 minutes was made by Talley, 2nd by McIntosh, approved unanimously.

Reports

Financial Report:

Monica Stone had nothing new to report. The legislature is still working on budgets. There was a slight increase for CAS in the next fiscal year.

CAS received two grants:

- Iowa College Aid commission – Latinos Can – pilot project, \$57,000 plus
- Talent Bank – remainder of funds from a two-year project

She will send the link to the Latinos Can – ICAN grant, that funded planning and staff person for 3 years, in the 3rd year. There was a question if Status of African Americans could apply for the grant? She answered yes they can.

Director/Division:

Stone explained the three areas for government access, data, and direct service. This year we would like to extend the outreach to other areas across the state. Stone introduced Kimberly Baxter, who gave an update on the Iowa Accountability Program (IAP) in the State Judicial Branch, who worked with domestic violence cases. She shared she is working on a grant with US Dept. of Health & Human Services for health equity. She will be contacting Rev. Whitfield to assist with the project. The other project she is working on is the Talent Bank, ensuring there are diverse candidates for boards and commissions within the African American community.

Office:

Cheeks, submitted a written office report, and mentioned there was not much added from the last meeting. Attended a couple of events; Voting Rights March Re-enactment, and a Juvenile Law Seminar. Topics highlighted; board and council meetings attended, and an update on the annual MLK celebration.

3:30 p.m. Commissioner Rosalind Fox joined the meeting.

Commissioners:

Smith-McIntosh

- Attended pro-life event in Missouri, heard the pres. of the State Baptist Convention who was a dynamic speaker
- Met with the chair and extended offer to meet with other members.

Talley

- He would like to meet with other members as well to get to know everyone better.
- Attended events in Dubuque, opening of a non-profit offering music, dance, song, speech, arts, aimed at school age children in the heart of town where it is most needed.
- Attended a meeting called Dubuque Forward, plan of action for where the city wants to go, formed passion groups to work on the efforts. Put his name on the board for financial literacy and education.

Sewell

- Background; starting working at a non-profit as the volunteer coordinator, CFUM, for grades k-5, for youth of color. In an area where he can recruit kids and retired teachers for the outreach programs. This job is giving him renewed energy and how to give back.

Whitfield

- A member of the Vax Des Moines effort, involve the faith community in COVID-19 vaccinations,
- Received the Governor's volunteer award, where he talked with some legislators about the model, and was invited to talk with others. Using his strength of the church to get to community members.
- Working on a project, social determinants of health, held a breakfast at his church talking about mental health to pastors, promoting their self-care. There will be a training for Blood Pressure and Diabetes, that will involve ambassadors to spread the word to other church members. Broadlawns will be helping with that project, hoping to achieve equity in health gap for African Americans.
- He will be the speaker at Joshua Academy's banquet, an African American Christian school.
- He will share the flyers and information.

Fox

- Welcomed the new commissioners

- She leads the John Deere factory in Ankeny, working on improving the relationships with Deere and the community.
- Will be attending Juneteenth activities. Where JD will be hiring with an exhibit table.
- Member of the Unicef and Thurgood Marshall speakers, a STEM program with Oakridge students on Saturdays in partnership with the National Assoc. of Black Engineers.
- Spoke to group of young ladies at Johnston High School, encouraging, helping them build courage and apply for college.

Baba-Singhri

- Working with board of directors from United Way and Evelyn K. Davis (EKD) Center - about African community computer literacy and met with new director of EKD to do a training.
- Attends a program called Medical Mondays, looking at mental health and suicide disparities. They meet every Monday with Dr. O on YouTube. Suicide is prevalent in the Nigerian community.
- The African community is having a festival in August. Will give more information when it is available.
- Presented at a conference in Chicago on how to teach African American inner-city kids.

Old Business

DHR Board update:

Chair Baba-Singhri reported the board has not met. They are working on setting a date.

Status of meeting with Governor Reynolds:

Baba-Singhri doesn't have an update. He will leave it up to the commissioners on how to move forward. He is very disappointed in the process and feels it shouldn't be this difficult to set a meeting with the Gov. office. His conclusion is we have to look inward, and stop looking outward for help from others. He joined the commission because he believes in the cause to help black people. Question on what we will be meeting about? His reply – to meet with her to provide an update about the listening sessions and COVID 19 update from the governor's office on what they did to address the issues outlined in the letter. New commissioners on the board – should update with current issues. Suppression of our voice is what's been going on for the past year. We are the voice of the Black community, if we can't express it what are we here for.

Iowa Legislative Black Caucus meeting update:

Baba-Singhri, met with them in May 2021 related to the issue about the Governor. They invited the commission to share the situation. He didn't get an opportunity to meet with Rep Ruth Ann Gaines. He will give an update when they meet.

Officer election:

McIntosh motioned to not hold the elections until May so that the new members can get to know the board members better. 2nd by Talley. Approved unanimously.

Asked Cheeks to provide more information on the duties of the Recorder.

4:00 pm Sutton joined the meeting

Sutton:

- She will be featured on PBS about the civil rights movement on June 20th
- Still working on the housing issues in Dubuque, initiated a class action lawsuit. Landlords ordered to pay tenants back and repair 300 buildings to bring up to code.
- \$100,000 grant to do fair housing tests.
- Black Iowans study being done in Dubuque.

Public Comment

Visitor:

Negus Sankofa Imhotep, gave his blessings to commissioner Sutton. Pointed out he left comments in the note section to Rev. Whitfield. He is a former commissioner and chairperson and wanted to say he is familiar with procedures of the commission, after a comment from McIntosh. He emphasized he could go to the governor's office and request a meeting when he served on the board. He feels Dr. Baba's comments about racism are true and will continue.

New Business

Discussion items:

Updating the name from ICSAA to ICSB:

McIntosh offered the name change from Commission on the Status of African-Americans to Commission on the Status of Blacks to be more inclusive of other cultures and ethnicities. Talley is not in favor of changing the name from African Americans because it diminishes our personhood. We are unique people and have a story to tell. Whitfield asked if there has been an indication of other cultures being left out? If so, we can be more conscious of it in the future. Chair Baba, explained when you say African American, Africans don't feel included. The commission decided to table the discussion for the next meeting.

Orientation for commissioners:

McIntosh feels there is a need for orientation for new members. She asked the division/office to set a date for an orientation and provide updated handbooks for new members.

Listening sessions:

McIntosh expressed the sessions are a way to hear what the community needs. Commissioners need business cards for outreach.

Meetings being hybrid teams/in-person:

There was little discussion. The consensus was to still hold virtually due to COVID-19.

Farewell to commissioners:

Dr. Baba thanked commissioner Sutton, still on the call, for her service. He also acknowledged commissioners Mead and Morris for their dedication and service to the state.

Upcoming Events

Orientation workshop May 12, 3-5 pm:

Cheeks and Stone will work on setting up the orientation.

Juneteenth 6/19 Festival:

McIntosh explained there are events held locally, and she had attended the Downtown Des Moines previously. Other events were mentioned and more information would be sent to share.

Next Meetings

FY2022 - May 26, June 30

FY2023 – July 28, October 27, January 2023, all to be held from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by McIntosh, 2nd by Talley,

Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cheeks

Kim Cheeks

Recorder